



# Southeast Fishery Bulletin

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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## KING MACKEREL COMMERCIAL FISHERY CLOSED IN WESTERN GULF FROM U.S./MEXICO BORDER TO ALABAMA/FLORIDA BOUNDARY

The commercial fishery for Gulf group king mackerel in the western zone is closed, **effective 12:00 noon (local time) September 24, 2003**, through June 30, 2004. The National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) projected that the western zone commercial quota of 1.01 million pounds of king mackerel for the 2003/2004 fishing year would be reached on September 23, 2003. With this action, the king mackerel commercial fishery in the Gulf of Mexico is closed from the U.S./Mexico border to the Alabama/Florida boundary (see reverse). This closure time should allow ample time for vessels to return safely to the docks.

Closure of the commercial king mackerel fishery in the western Gulf complies with regulations implemented under the Fishery Management Plan for Coastal Migratory Pelagic Resources of the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic (FMP) and is necessary to protect the Gulf group king mackerel resource. In cooperative actions, Gulf states (Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama) are expected to close commercial harvest of king mackerel concurrently in adjoining state waters.

Except for a person aboard a charter vessel or headboat, during the closure, no person aboard a vessel for which a commercial permit for king mackerel has been issued may fish for Gulf group king mackerel in Federal waters in the closed zone or subzone. A person aboard a vessel that has a valid charter vessel/headboat permit for coastal migratory pelagic fish may continue to retain king mackerel in or from the closed zone/subzone under the 2-fish daily bag limit, provided the vessel is operating as a charter vessel or headboat. Charter vessels or headboats that hold a commercial king mackerel permit are considered to be operating as a charter vessel or

headboat when they carry a passenger who pays a fee or when more than three persons are aboard, including operator and crew.

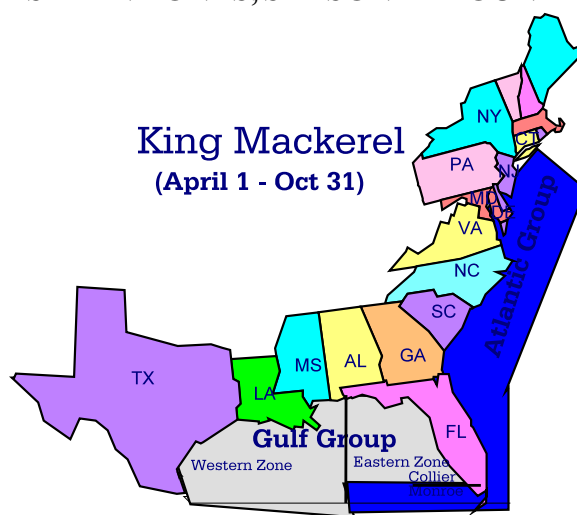
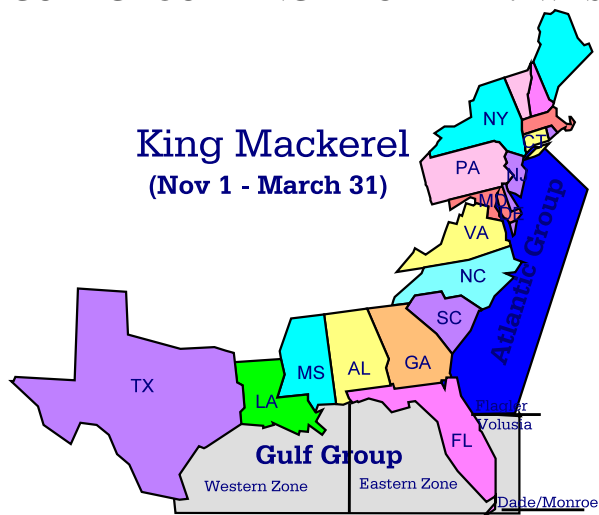
During the closure, no king mackerel caught in the closed zone/subzone may be purchased, bartered, traded, or sold. This prohibition of sale does not apply to trade in king mackerel that were harvested, landed ashore and bartered, traded, or sold before the closure and held in cold storage by a dealer or processor.

Quotas and closure provisions for mackerel fisheries were developed in the FMP jointly by the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic Fishery Management Councils. In compliance with the FMP, an annual commercial quota of 3.26 million pounds was established for Gulf group king mackerel. This quota was divided into commercial quotas of 1.01 million pounds for the western zone and 2.25 million pounds for the eastern zone off Florida. Regulations implemented under the FMP require closure of any segment of the commercial fishery when its quota is reached or is projected to be reached.

To report violations of commercial trip limits or closures, contact NMFS Law Enforcement Division at **727/570-5344 or 1-800/853-1964**. NOAA Fisheries is an agency of the Commerce Department's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

Additional information on southeastern fisheries may be found on the Web sites of the Gulf of Mexico (<http://www.gulfcouncil.org>) or South Atlantic (<http://www.safmc.nmfs.gov>) Fishery Management Council; they may be contacted by e-mail at [gulf.council@noaa.gov](mailto:gulf.council@noaa.gov), or [safmc@noaa.gov](mailto:safmc@noaa.gov) respectively.

## GULF GROUP KING MACKEREL: WESTERN AND EASTERN ZONES, SEASONAL BOUNDARIES



## GULF GROUP KING MACKEREL: STATUS OF QUOTAS AND DAILY TRIP/LANDING LIMITS FOR COMMERCIAL FISHERIES FOR THE 2003/2004 FISHING YEAR

ZONE/SUBZONE	QUOTA (POUNDS, lb)	DAILY VESSEL TRIP LIMITS	DURATION OF TRIP LIMITS		STATUS	
					BEGINNING	CURRENT
EASTERN ZONE (Florida)	2,250,000					
East Coast Subzone <sup>1</sup>	1,040,625	50 Fish 75 Fish <sup>2</sup>	Nov 1, 03 Feb 1, 04	until 780,469 lb until 1,040,625 lb	Opens: Nov 1, 03	<b>Closed Apr 1, 2003</b>
West Coast Subzones	1,209,375					
<u>Northern</u>						
Hook and Line	168,750	1,250 lb 500 lb	Jul 1, 03 126,563	until 126,563 lb until 168,750 lb	Opened: Jul 1, 03	<b>Open: 1,250 lb/day</b>
<u>Southern</u>						
Hook and Line	520,312	1,250 lb 500 lb	Jul 1, 03 390,234 lb	until 390,234 lb until 520,312 lb	Opened: Jul 1, 03	<b>Open: 1,250 lb/day</b>
Gillnet	520,312	25,000 lb 0 lb	Jan 21, 03 Feb 4, 03	until 520,312 lb until Jan 20, 04	Opens: Jan 20, 04 <sup>3</sup>	<b>Closed: Feb 4, 2003</b>
WESTERN ZONE (Texas - Alabama)	1,010,000	3,000 lb 0 lb	Jul 1, 03 1,010,000 lb until	until 1,010,000 lb Jul 1, 04	Opened: Jul 1, 03	<b>Closed: Sep 24, 2003</b>
Hook and Line						

<sup>1</sup> The Florida east coast subzone, located between the Flagler/Volusia and Miami-Dade/Monroe County boundaries, exists only from November 1 through March 31, when the Gulf migratory group of king mackerel extends into that area. From April 1 through October 31, king mackerel landed in that area belong to the Atlantic migratory group.

<sup>2</sup> Trip limit would increase from 50 to 75 fish/day on February 1, 2004, if less than 75 percent or 780,469 pounds of the Florida east coast subzone quota is harvested prior to February 1, 2004.

<sup>3</sup> Fishery is closed until 6:00 a.m., January 20, 2004.